

Canberra Night and Day

Mark Hanna rides shotgun in the latest Bush Ranger to rule the tough Aussie landscape in swagging style.



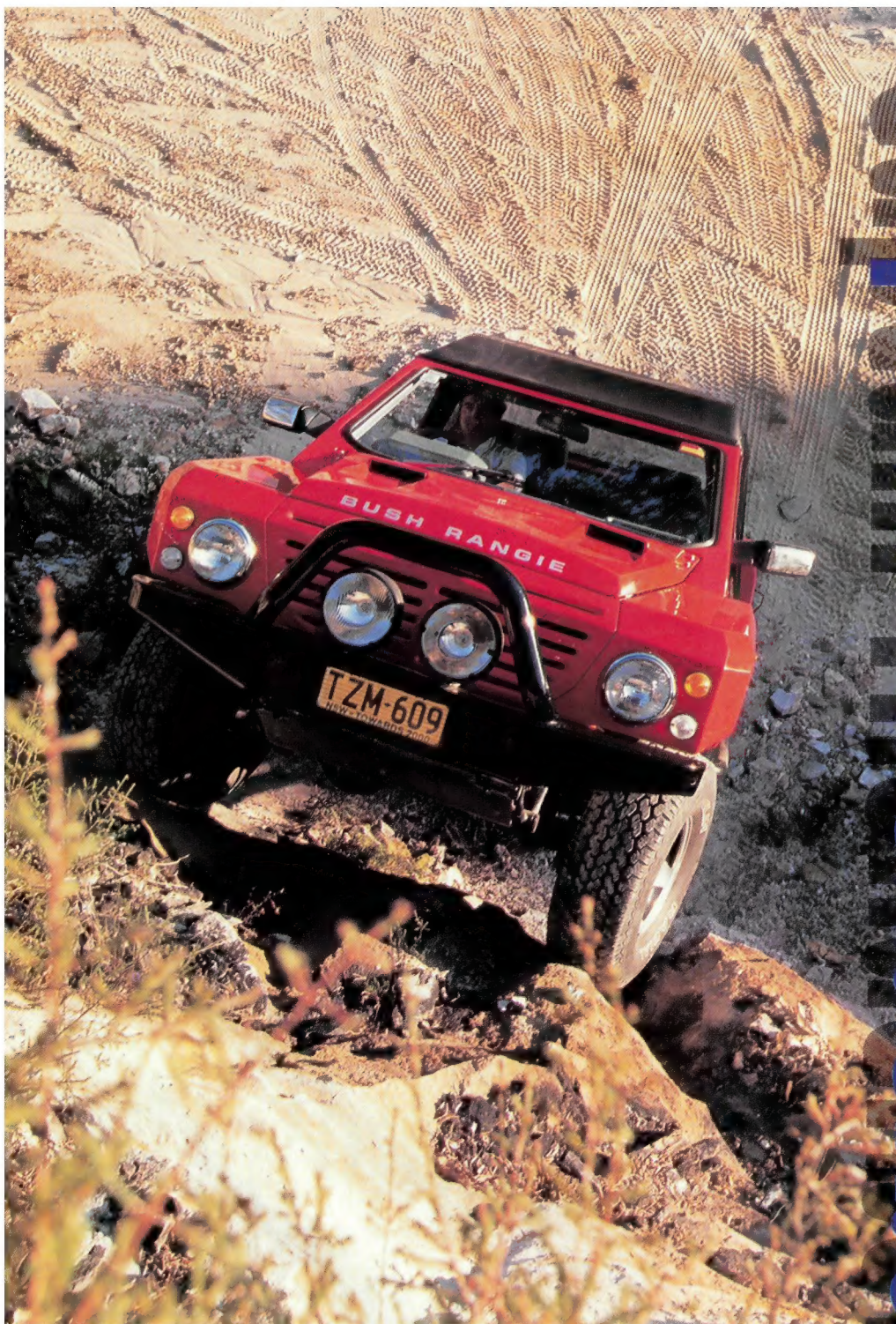
"I can go and get the other one. This one's fitted with road tyres — good on the road but not for this type of driving," said John Davis, explaining why his Bush Ranger didn't make it up this almost vertical (Almost vertical?! Shee-it from where I sat it was vertical) sandstone wall on its first attempt.

And that didn't sit too well with John. He's what you'd call a seasoned four-wheel driver. In other words, someone who's been doing it for 20-odd years and who doesn't like being beaten by a bloody sandstone wall.

The English-designed Bush Ranger, rebuilt in Australia to

handle Aussie conditions, is perfect for those occasions when you think you've come up against the impossible. And, believe me, there aren't too many places it won't go.

When 4WD Australia wanted a feature a story on the Bush Ranger, Aussie manufacturer John Davis was keen to show us firsthand what the purpose-built 4WD is capable of. In fact, at the rear of his motorworks business at Amaroo Raceway, Annangrove, NSW, Davis has designed a 4WD testing area that'll put any 'so-called 4WD' through its paces. A perfect place to start.



Captain Thunderbolt

"Damn! The boys borrowed it on the weekend and took it to Stockton Beach (Newcastle, NSW) and they didn't fill it up," Davis said. One call on the mobile phone and only minutes later, the other Bush Ranger Davis had mentioned — the one with the soft compound tyres, locker diffs etc, that'll basically go anywhere — rolled up with one of his employees and more fuel.

While the empty Bush Ranger was being refilled, John invited me to jump into this one. Clicking back through the memory banks I asked myself how long it was since I'd been in a vertical car. 'Cause I knew exactly where we were going ... yep, one sandstone wall Davis was so eager to scale not so long ago coming right atcha! Four wheels on, first gear low and before you could lose your hair, go for the transplant and scream yeah, yeah, we were at the top.

"See, I told you it'd do it easy," Davis leered. I relaxed a little, thinking it was all over, then, shit, there

was the wall again. This time, though, we were coming at it from a different angle. Like, it was right in front of us and we were on the downward run. As we passed the point of no return and hit the bottom, I was certain I felt the rear of the car coming over.

"Far out, John, that was a bit extreme!"

While thrashing the V8-powered Bush Ranger around the fast section of track and getting it airborne, Davis calmly explained how he liked taking journalists and prospective buyers around his test track.

"This one's a real beauty," he said as we pulled up on the downside of a humungous jump. "See that puddle at the bottom?"

"Er ... yes."

"Well, that's as deep as the car."

"Uh ... really?"

"Yeah. You don't expect that when you go through it. You should see the facial expressions you get from passengers when the car is completely swamped. It's a sight."

Yeah, right.

Just as we were about to get a few serious air shots of the Bush Ranger, a slight mishap occurred: it ran out of fuel.



Four wheels on, first gear low and before you could lose your hair, go for the transplant and scream yeah, yeah, we were at the top.

"Yeah ... that's probably the limit, you know."

It's that kind of excitement which only the 'serious' 4WDs such as the Bush Ranger can punch out that prompted Davis to buy the Australian and world manufacturing rights when he was holidaying in England.

Wreckless abandon

Built around a Range Rover chassis and driveline, the Bush Ranger gets its start in life via a wreck, utilising the motor, drivetrain and chassis (check out the picture of the Rangie organ donor waiting for the transplant into a Bush Ranger).

The base price for a Bush Ranger is \$37,000. Built in strict compliance to Australian Design Rules, it can be registered in any state in Australia, with a full engineer's report and 12-month/20,000km warranty as part of the deal. The standard heartbeat includes a reconditioned carbureted 3.5L V8 petrol motor with standard exhaust system driving a four-speed manual or three-speed (fully reconditioned) auto. Four-wheel disc brakes and a total remanufacture of Range Rover suspension components make driving the Bush Ranger sheer pleasure.

With significant weight reduction, less overhang, increased ground clearance

and a better power-to-weight ratio, the Bush Ranger is a precision 4WD machine both on and off road. Like the suspension, all steering components are remanufactured to ensure a precise, comfortable ride, the hi-tech suspension options making the Bush Ranger able to handle all types of situations.

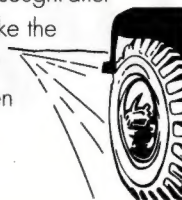
The one-piece bodyshell is manufactured from highly durable, corrosion- and scratch-resistant GRP, braced by a high-strength galvanised steel roll frame bolted to a proven Range Rover chassis. Huge front and rear impact bars, solid construction and water-resistant trim ensure the Bush Ranger is up to any task you might have in mind.

The permanent 4WD chassis and four-wheel disc brakes offer proven safety levels in handling, while the fully padded steel rollcage, side intrusion bars, front and rear impact bars, laminated glass, modest ride height and optional driver's airbag add up to a total safety package.

Since the Bush Ranger has been manufactured in Australia the concept has become so popular there are something like 30 orders (at the time of writing). Of course, the worldwide scenario is even bigger and one Davis finds really exciting.

He plans to tread carefully, though. There'll be no giant manufacturing plant

set up. Davis is interested in making his Bush Ranger a rather sought-after vehicle. "You know, like the Morgan Sportscar," he said. "They've been around for years."



Bush Ranger Options List

V8 petrol motors
New factory 3.9-litre with hot wire injection
New factory 4.2-litre with hot wire injection
Fully reconditioned 4.2-litre (all new internals)
Fully reconditioned 4.6-litre (all new internals)

Diesel motors

3.9-litre 4BDI Isuzu low mount turbo
2500 TDI as in Defender/Discovery
300TDI as in Defender/Discovery
Superchargers/turbos

Manual transmissions

Early five-speed (1986) with transfer assembly to suit
Late five-speed (1990) with transfer to suit

Automatic transmissions

Three-speed Torqueflite with transfer to suit
Four-speed ZF with transfer to suit
Diff centre and extra-heavy-duty axles, Maxi Drive diff lock
Viscous transfer

Suspension/steering

Special compound bushes
Koni oil or Bilstein gas shocks
Polyair air bag system
Anti-rollbar — front or rear
AVS suspension systems
New manual steering box (very light ratio)
Needle roller power steering box
Heavy-duty track rod and drag link
Rear diff guard
Front diff guard and bashplate

Miscellaneous

Phase II instrument assembly
Italian timber/leather steering wheels
Recaro and leather?????
Alloy road wheels
Tyres 33x15x12.5 up to 39x14.5x15
Body lifts (1-5")
Huge ESR80 radiator
Dash-top-mounted radio/pod
IPF driving lights
Engine oil coolers
Air jack
Magnum air compressor
110" wheelbase
HM62 extractors
2.5" stainless steel exhaust system
2.5" exhaust system
Tool box (rear-mounted)
Stainless steel electric mirrors
Snorkels
Towbar and electrics

Captain Thunderbolt

Bush Ranger Standard Specs

ENGINE	3.5L V8 petrol motor
TRANSMISSION	Four-speed manual or three-speed Borg Warner
DIFF	Range Rover (3.5:1)
SUSPENSION	Range Rover (all remanufactured)
CHASSIS	Modified 100" wheelbase from Range Rover platform, braced to allow bolt-on towbar option
ROLL FRAME	Tubular steel, padded and upholstered
WINDSCREEN	Laminated Aust std
DASHBOARD	Complete Range Rover dash up to Phase II
INTERIOR	Reupholstered, seating for five people with adjustable front bucket seats covered in velour or UV-resistant vinyl, five seatbelts, carpet
CANOPY	Complete to, rear and side curtains fitted with ultra-clear windows
IMPACT BARS	Front and rear and side intrusion
LIGHTING	All lighting as per Roads & Traffic Authority
WHEELS & TYRES	17x7 Sunraysia with 10.5x31x15 BF Goodrich A/T
POWER STEERING	Std Range Rover
FUEL SYSTEM	80-litre alloy tank
BATTERY SYSTEM	Two boxes and one heavy-duty battery (provisions for extra battery)
FITTINGS	Adjustable mirrors, sunvisors, ventilation, heating, upholstered inner windscreen panels
JACK & WHEEL BRACE	Std Range Rover

New developments For Bush Ranger

- ▲ Gullwing-type doors
- ▲ CB radio affixed to a centre console above and between driver and passenger
- ▲ A 3.9L Isuzu 4BDIT Turbo Diesel for a top-of-the-range engine conversion (used to power the 6x6 Land Rover)
- ▲ Camping gear trailer (same shape as rear of car)



- 1 & 2. Production stage.
3. Bush Ranger rolling chassis.
4. Solid chassis - roll bar design makes the Bush Ranger seriously tough.
5. A wrecked Range Rover bought from the auction & waiting for a new life as a Bush Ranger.
6. Top-of-the-range engine conversion includes 3.9L Isuzu 4BDIT Turbo Diesel (used to power the 6x6 Land Rover)
7. John Davis plans to make the Bush Ranger the most sought-after 4WD in Oz.